



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY TESTIFIES BEFORE U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
Asks for More Assistance For North Carolina Farmers Suffering from Drought

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Full Committee on Agriculture about how the drought has affected farmers and agriculture in North Carolina. The purpose of the hearing was to review agriculture disaster conditions from across the nation. Easley was the only governor to testify before Committee members.

“In North Carolina we have asked citizens to stop watering their lawns, to take shorter showers and to avoid washing cars but these conservation efforts will do little to resolve the devastation the drought has brought to our agriculture industry,” Easley said during his testimony in Washington, D.C. “Some of our crops yields are at the lowest levels we have seen in 50 years and many farmers predict that they will have not enough hay to last through the winter.”

Field crops are predicted to suffer great losses as a result of the dry conditions. Soybean yields are projected to be at 20 bushels per acre, which will be the lowest yield since 1983. Peanut yields are down 800 pounds per acre from last year. Corn yields are now at 89 bushels per acre. That is the smallest yields have been since 2002. Cotton production is now expected to total 2,000 pounds an acre, a 51 percent drop from production last year. For fruit crops that managed to survive the Easter Weekend freeze, the months without significant rain have resulted in a forecast that cuts North Carolina apple production down to 50 million pounds from 173 million pounds last year. Peach production is estimated at 1,000 tons, down 82 percent from last year. Both of these crops are experiencing the smallest yields since 1955.

Hay is a major concern for livestock farmers. Estimated production levels are at 897,000 tons of hay, a 45 percent drop from last year. As a result, farmers across the state have reported that they will need 800,000 additional bales of hay to get them through the winter. Many farmers whose corn and soybean crops have been ruined by the drought are now baling it for silage and selling it for animal feed. Farmers are also exploring alternative resources for livestock water. With 72 counties in North Carolina classified as under exceptional drought, the most serious drought classification, many streams have stopped running and ponds have dried up.

On September 14, 2007, at Easley’s request, the U.S. Department of Agriculture designated 85 North Carolina counties as disaster areas. This declaration allowed farmers in these counties to become